



Full Briefing for Swarming Actions

Before reading this, please read the [XR Action Consensus](#).

Why Swarming?

There are two main forms of classical warfare:

1. Head to head confrontation, popular with the Greeks and Romans, where you send large numbers of troops into combat.
2. Swarming tactics/Guerilla warfare- Where you use smaller numbers to target specific locations to weaken the enemy and avoid direct confrontation.
 - a. E.g The Mongolian “Feigned retreat” where Mongolian light cavalry would run away from European heavy cavalry in the Middle Ages and then turn around to fire arrows at them. By splitting up the heavy cavalry army and exhausting them across the battlefield, the Mongol armies were able to disperse and pick up easy victories.

In combating the state, we use our large numbers to help create change. However, large demonstrations are arguably easier for riot police to deal with as they can ‘kettle’ (mass arrest) protestors and be prepared with vans to take people away. With swarming tactics, we can use these large numbers to disperse and create smaller, targeted points of resistance that the police will struggle to manage. This can create the kind of economic disruption that will directly challenge existing systems and force rapid change.

With low-level non-violent civil disobedience, eg peaceful roadblocks, we can also avoid arrestable scenarios while still creating economic disruption. The key to this is in its scalability. Once groups are prepared to roadblocks, they can repeatedly target key areas of the city whilst other groups do the same. The more groups that are doing it, the harder it is to manage while the protest itself does not change.

Another key advantage of swarming roadblocks is that they are highly inclusive. More traditional forms of protest, i.e face to face conflict with the police, are dominated by a macho culture and will put off others through risk of arrest and confrontation. Swarming roadblocks, however, are very simple to carry out, can have a lower risk of arrest and can be done by anyone. This means that more young people, elders and women can join the resistance which is crucial

to its success. It should be noted that risk of arrest can be easier to manage, often you can just walk away, however, if you continue to swarm persistently you run the risk of being arrested for public nuisance. See below.

How does it work?

Road block swarming is a way to bring city streets to a gridlock, and cause severe delays with a lower risk of arrest.

The key feature is to gradually disrupt traffic.

The main mechanism is as follows:

Choose an exit from the roundabout/road on a major crossing

Go onto the pedestrian crossing, sit down facing the traffic in a row across all the lanes (it is good for people to know where they are going to sit beforehand), put a banner/umbrellas across the front of people facing the cars

Two people go forward to offer cupcakes/bite size sweet food to the drivers up to 30 metres from the block apologising for the delay, "We apologise for the delay – this is protest about the climate and ecological crisis – we will be finished in a few minutes."

At 7 minutes, the timekeeper shouts out "7 minutes" – and then as soon as the lights turn to red the timekeeper shouts "everyone off the road". Everyone gets off the road. Wait till the lights change to green and the vehicles at the front of the block drive off. When the lights turn to red then the lead person shouts everyone goes back on the road and the process is repeated.

When the police arrive or once this has been down 3-4 times – move round to another exit from the roundabout/major road and repeat.

If lots of people arrive – go and have a break for 20 minutes and/or go back from the roundabout and block the road further from the roundabout. Alternatively go to another roundabout or intersection which is communicated via a HQ which keeps an overview of the situation.

There can be variations on this briefing, but this is the main scenario.

An alternative arrangement which we may use.

This is totally legal and so can be put into practice say on Friday if and when the police are told to take a more proactive approach of dragging people off the road without the 5 stage warning process:

Around 50 people walk backwards and forwards across a crossing continuously for 7 minutes as the lights change back from red to green. This is totally legal. The prediction is that members of

the public will cross when the lights are green for the traffic as people tend to cross the road based upon what other people are doing rather than looking at the lights

Debrief

At the end of the day it is important to have a debrief to share food and thoughts on the day. Good to pick a spot that is warm and fairly quiet so you can share how they the experience made you feel, how you would improve it for next time and something you feel excited about.

The Swarming Specifics

This requires a serious commitment. We're talking about disrupting thousands of lives, while potentially bringing humanity back from the brink of extinction and into a new way of relating to each other and our planetary whole.

On the morning of the actions you should gather at various assembly points at 7am. For this to work, we have to disrupt the morning commute. This form of economic disruption relies on a large number of workers not getting to work.

Commit to 8 hours, as if it were a work day – as if paying your rent or having food depended on it. So 7am to 3pm.

Groups will then need to practice the roadblocks and get into a strict routine of “7 minutes on, 2 minutes off”. This timeframe allows enough disruption to create cascading congestion while also keeping the front drivers happy. There needs to be a group timekeeper which can be switched during the day.

A example plan of the day:

Meet in the morning. Receive a briefing from your roadblocking veteran on the roles for the day. As a group, plan to do it ten times (1:30hr- 70mins on road, 20mins break), take a 20 minute break, another 10 times (1:30hr), 40 minute lunch break, another 10 times (1:40hr), take a 20 minute break, another 10 times (1:30hr). That's 40 road-blocks in a day!

However, that doesn't include travel time. Travel time will be necessary, in order to swarm and re-group after you are told to move by the police. You can use the tube system/walk elsewhere if the police tell you to move and take a break. Make sure you take breaks to eat well, as you'll need energy to keep your alertness and calm composure.

Choose locations carefully to maximise disruption. Familiarity with the geography of London will help when choosing locations. For example, blocking the exit of a roundabout will quickly block the entire roundabout, causing a multiplying effect of grid-lock in an entire area. For disruption, 30 minutes of blocking is ideal and after that groups can move to another location nearby. A minimum of two blocks is advised.

Also, we don't need to be stubborn about this. People are likely to be very angry and emotional, especially towards the end of the week. If someone is desperate to get by or venting a lot of emotions at you, it's OK to relent and leave the junction in order to reduce the emotional intensity. We will also let all emergency vehicles and those in desperate need (e.g dying relative) through. It's not about staying for a 7-full-minutes. It's about getting in-and-out persistently throughout the day.

Please read through this document on how to deal with aggression on roadblocks

Roles

Each swarming group should be made up of 15-20 people. Of which there should be:

- Two veteran roadblockers (or those who are comfortable and confident with coordinating direct action)
- One social media person, ideally filming and livestreaming the blocks (portable phone chargers are advised)
- Two wellbeing people who check in that everyone doing the road block is okay and be up for supporting anyone who may get arrested (best to always ask where people are being taken)
- Someone who has been to Arrest Watch training
- Two de-escalators (handing out food and chatting the drivers while they wait)
- One person to hold a sign saying "Sorry for the delay. We're going to be 7 minutes"

Key points

- Wear normal clothes (some with hi-vis jackets)
- Don't run.
- Don't resist arrest.
- Emergency services – let them through
- Take regular breaks to check in with each other

Deep Rooting

We all have our different reasons for acting and different motivations. It is important to root yourself in those feelings before embarking on this style of protest. The situation we're in is dire and urgent. Economic disruption is one of the only methods that we know of that might be able

to shift the direction of our species rapidly enough to create the change we need. And so this swarming disruption is a life-and-death issue. Our future existence may depend on it.

Setting Intent

Setting our intent is important. Writing it and speaking it has power. Words create our realities. Sharing those intentions create shared realities, by becoming commitments to others. In this way, trust is built.

I encourage you to check in with yourself. Slow down your 'yes' so that you can have confidence in it when or if it comes. Practice radical consent.

For those who want to, we invite everyone to write down their intentions for any actions they plan to engage in. Maybe you're prepared to write "I commit to doing 8 hours of road-blocks for 2 days. I will not waiver." Or whatever it is you're prepared to do. If you want to something but don't feel ready to do it, try writing down the steps that would prepare you for it. "I want to be okay with risking arrest" - "Okay so if I want to be okay with risking arrest, I need to know the [possible outcomes of having a criminal record](#), I need to know [what it is like to be arrested](#), I need to speak to my family about it..."